First record of Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* in Oman, Eastern Arabia

by Ben F. King and Michael D. Gallagher

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At 0730 on 23 September 1982, at West Khawr (an estuary), Salalah, in Dhofar, the southern province of the Sultanate of Oman, we identified a Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris,* a species not previously acceptably identified in Oman. The bird was near other waders but very shy, and as we approached it flew to the sandy shore of the Arabian Sea and joined several Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica.* When flushed from there it flew strongly up the coast. It was about the size and coloration of a nearby Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola,* but had a longer and strongly tapered bill, noticeably broad at the base, narrow and very slightly decurved at the tip, and had a thinner neck and smaller head. The axillaries were white. It fed with the body held horizontally while deliberately probing with the bill. When near a Common Redshank *Tringa totanus,* the Knot's body appeared larger and its legs shorter. It was much larger and heavier than a nearby Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres,* and than several Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea.* Its call was a low hard *chuck,* repeated rapidly when taking wing and less rapidly when standing. Its greyish upper parts, as early as this date in autumn, would indicate that the bird was an adult in basic plumage (Dement'ev *et al.* 1951, and Humphrey & Parkes 1959).

Later on the same day, at 1645, we found 2 Great Knots at another estuary, Khawr Rayzut, c. 10 km west of West Khawr. We observed them for about 1 hour at 100 m with a 25x telescope. One was in the same plumage as the Great Knot seen that morning, but appeared to have more distinct grey spots on the upper breast, which suggested that it was not the morning's bird. The other bird had generally much darker upper parts than its companion, and had a heavy "necklace" of blackish spots across its upper breast, indicating it was an adult in partial alternate plumage. Detailed descriptions of all 3 birds are available in the Ornithology Dept. of the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

B.F.K. has had considerable experience with this species in Korea, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. As far as we know, this is the first certain record of the Great Knot for the entire Arabian Peninsula. There are, however, 2 earlier Oman possible sight records from Masirah Island. T. D. Rogers made one sighting on 30 Nov 1974 (Griffiths & Rogers 1976) and T. D. Rogers and C. A. Pomeroy another on 6 Dec 1975 (Rogers *in litt.*). While the descriptions of these sightings are suggestive of Great Knot, the birds were not positively identified at the time and they are not confirmable.

The Great Knot breeds in NE Siberia and winters from southern Asia to Australia (Dement'ev *et al.* 1951, Ali & Ripley 1980, Condon 1975). It is nowhere common in winter and its main wintering grounds are unknown, the westernmost records being from the Makran and Sind coasts of Pakistan (Ali & Ripley 1980), where they are uncommon. Although Vaurie (1965) states that the Great Knot has occurred in the Persian Gulf, Scott (1975) lists no records for Iran, and Bundy & Warr (1980) list no records for the southern shores of the Gulf. The proximity of the Oman coast to the

Pakistan coast, and the fact that the Great Knot must fly in a southwesterly direction to reach Pakistan from its breeding grounds, would lead one to expect that it might well reach the Arabian Peninsula at least occasionally. A recent sight record as far west as Morocco on 27 Aug 1980 (Lister 1981) lends support to this expectation. Further, a flock of 70 Great Knots that B.F.K. observed near Karachi on 11 Mar 1981 had not been observed there previously that winter, suggesting that they had wintered farther south. The fact that the Great Knot has occurred as far south as southern Australia and Tasmania (Condon 1975), also suggests the possibility of its occurrence in winter to the south of Oman, on the east African coast. On migration and in winter, B.F.K. has usually found it on coastal mud-flats and sand-flats, including tidal creeks.

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Addresses. B. F. King, c/o Ornithology Dept., American Museum of Natural History Central Park West at 79th St., New York, N.Y. 10024, USA.
M. D. Gallagher, Oman Natural History Museum, Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, P.O. Box 668, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

Reappraisal of variation in the nightjar *Caprimulgus natalensis* Smith

by R. M. Harwin

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Huxley (1964) listed the Caprimulgiformes as an order in which polymorphism was absent, evidently overlooking its occurrence in *Caprimulgus donaldsoni,* which had already been documented by Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1952). More recently, Benson & Colebrook-Robjent (1977) have shown that it occurs in *Caprimulgus pectoralis,* and in the course of preparing the section on the Caprimulgidae for Volume 3 of *The Birds of Africa* (Urban